

VZCZCXRO0652
RR RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW RUEHSL
DE RUEHNT #1095/01 1771029
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 261031Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1066
INFO ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
CIS COLLECTIVE
NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0200
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 001095

SIPDIS
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/06/26
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: Uzbekistan: Human Rights Round Table

TASHKENT 00001095 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Holly Thomas, Pol/Econ Officer, Department of State;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) Summary: Local human rights activists and members of the diplomatic corps attended a round table discussion at the Embassy on June 23, 2009. Among the attendees was Elena Urlaeva, who reported she is doing fine after having been roughed last week by hooligans while doing activist work. Highlights of the discussion included the assertion that the GOU is trying to assert its control over the human rights NGO community by co-opting the issue; a call to stand up for the rights of Hizb ut-Tahrir members in custody, and a plea that child labor in the cotton sector not be viewed in isolation from larger issues of agricultural reform. Consensus in the room was that the GOU has become savvier talking about human rights issues, but that little has changed on the ground. End Summary.

Urlaeva Attacked Again, Doing Fine

12. (C) Press reports last week had mentioned that Elena Urlaeva from the Human Rights Alliance was attacked in front of the Czech Embassy when trying to call attention to certain human rights abuses. Urlaeva claims to have been a frequent victim of attacks in the past, some of which have led to serious injury. She stated that this time, "hooligans" attempted to stab her as local police looked on, but she suffered only minor injuries. She appeared to be in good health and good spirits, although she expressed her concern about increasing harassment and administrative cases being brought against activists in an effort to intimidate them.

GOU Co-Opting the Role of NGOs doing Human Rights Work?

¶3. (C) Sukhrob Ismailov, a Columbia University alumnus from Rapid Reaction Group (an organization of local experts and analysts looking at trends and prognoses in the area of human rights), stated that the GOU is giving a great deal of attention to human rights issues right now, hosting various conferences and events on a frequent basis. Ismailov asserted that this attention is merely cosmetic, and part of the government's broader strategy to co-opt and control the NGO sector.

The Meat Grinder Effect

¶4. (C) Dilarom Iskhakova, an activist working against torture and ill-treatment in prisons, spoke passionately about the mistreatment that alleged members of Hizb ut-Tahrir are receiving in pre-trial detention facilities, claiming that one alleged member was recently killed as a result of torture while in detention. She argued that it is necessary to set aside disagreement with avowedly extremist Hizb ut-Tahrir ideology in order to recognize the abuses that are going on against alleged members and to fight against those abuses. She also stated that the more these people are victimized, the more extreme a person's views become, and the more the Hizb ut-Tahrir membership grows. "It's like a meat grinder," she said.

TASHKENT 00001095 002.2 OF 002

Child Labor in the Cotton Industry

¶5. (U) Three activists from different organizations involved with the child labor issue all remarked that child labor in the cotton industry cannot be looked at in isolation, and commented that reforms of the entire agricultural system would be necessary to end the long-standing practice of sending school children to pick cotton during the fall harvest. One activist added that asking the world to boycott Uzbekistan cotton is not the way to go about ending the practice.

¶6. (C) Comment: The round table provided a good opportunity to take the measure of the human rights situation from some of our most-respected contacts. That the GOU is trying to co-opt the NGO work in the human rights field is an interesting assertion that appears to be somewhat borne out by trends we have observed as well. The issue of abuses against alleged Hizb ut-Tahrir members while in custody is one that does not always get much attention or sympathy in Uzbekistan, but it raises the concern that torture against these people is a catalyst to increased extremism that could actually strengthen Hizb ut-Tahrir in the long run.

NORLAND
NORLAND